

AGENDA SUMMARY PAGE
CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF: OCTOBER 7, 2009

DEPARTMENT: ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

DIRECTOR: TED J. OLIVAS

☐ Consent ☒ Discussion

SUBJECT:

Report and possible action on the status of the 2011 Federal Legislative Action Plan and municipal issues at the 111th United States Congress - All Wards

Fiscal Impact



No Impact



Augmentation Required



Budget Funds Available

Amount:

Funding Source:

Dept./Division:

PURPOSE/BACKGROUND:

Our Federal Lobbyist, Vicki Cram of Ball Janik LLP, will present an updated report on federal issues regarding the City of Las Vegas from the 111th US Congress.

RECOMMENDATION:

Accept the report and direct staff accordingly.

BACKUP DOCUMENTATION:

None

Motion made by GARY REESE to Approve to Accept the report

Passed For: 7; Against: 0; Abstain: 0; Did Not Vote: 0; Excused: 0
RICKI Y. BARLOW, LOIS TARKANIAN, STEVE WOLFSON, OSCAR B. GOODMAN,
GARY REESE, STEVEN D. ROSS, STAVROS S. ANTHONY; (Against-None); (Abstain-None); (Did Not Vote-None); (Excused-None)

Minutes:

TED OLIVAS, Director of Administrative Services, who was joined by VICKI CRAM, federal lobbyist for the City and Director of Government Relations with Ball Janik LLP, indicated that a brief overview would be presented on the status of this year's federal plan and what staff is doing in preparation for next year's federal plan, as well as current activity in Washington, D.C.

During a recent visit, staff met with representatives from the White House, Department of Energy, House Natural Resources Committee to talk about issues relating to the current fiscal situation, appropriations, neighborhood stabilization plans, energy and sustainability efforts, developing public lands, the potential national park in the Northwest corridor, efforts with American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), including reporting concerns and assistance for the use of Recovery Zone Bonds, a matter on which staff continues to work with

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CONGRESSWOMAN SHELLEY BERKLEY'S office, as well as miscellaneous topics regarding the local economy, homelessness, foreclosures and unemployment.

MR. OLIVAS noted that briefings will be scheduled with the individual Councilmembers to discuss and finalize next year's legislative plan, which will be presented to the Council at a meeting of January 2010.

MS. CRAM indicated that with a new administration and new Congress, it has been a very active year. The delegation has been working very hard and effectively on the City's behalf. The process for the FY-2010 appropriations requests has not been completed, and only one of the 12 appropriations bills was passed. Congress is working to process the remaining bills during the month of November, while the federal government operates on a continuing resolution.

Due to the delegation's efforts, the City has several worthy congressionally directed spending projects that have been funded this year, including \$600,000 for the regional public safety complex and its emergency operations center. Coupled with \$1 million from the Department of Homeland Security's Urban Area Security Initiative funding, this project can go forward. In addition to last year's funding of \$500,000 for the Bonneville Couplet, \$500,000 was appropriated this year. The foreclosure prevention measure received \$200,000 in funding.

MS. CRAM reported that early action in Congress was dominated by the development of the Economic Recovery Package and ARRA. The City engaged with the Conference of Mayors, the National League of Cities and the National Association of Counties in efforts to get as much funding as possible directed to cities and local government. The result was mixed with some funding, such as the Community Development Block Grant and the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant, but much of the funding was directed to the states.

MS. CRAM informed MAYOR GOODMAN that from the overall bill, \$11 million was received, with \$220 million in grant applications pending. But she did not know how much the City has received from the state's funding of \$2.1 billion for transportation and Medicare.

MAYOR GOODMAN asked how much has the state received that should be going to the City. ROMEO BETEA, Office of Business Development, indicated that the City received direct funding of \$5,000 as most of the funding is issued through competitive grants, but the City has not submitted for a lot of monies through grants. CITY MANAGER ELIZABETH FRETWELL rejoined that she has already directed MR. BATEA to put together a monthly report for the Council defining what the City has requested from state allocations, the status on eligible congressional mandate funding vs. competitive grants, an estimate on how many jobs could be created in the City employment base, and what the multiplier impact would be on community-created jobs as a result of getting bonds into the local economy. CITY MANAGER FRETWELL added that the federal government is working on a formula for all entities to use in defining job creation.

MAYOR GOODMAN said he would like City staff and the lobbyists to do whatever possible to get as much monies as possible for the City, but it appears that is a challenging task. CITY

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MANAGER FRETWELL indicated that she met with most of the federal representatives to explain the City's financial situation, and they all encouraged her to obtain stimulus funding, so City staff is doing everything possible to take advantage of federal monies available to cities. But with regard to state monies, there are regulations the cities have to follow to obtain some of those monies. She remains hopeful the City will be successful during the next wave of funding from the Department of Energy.

The City Manager emphasized that after previous discussions on funding availability, the federal delegation really fought for the City to expedite release of the funds, and City staff continues to keep the delegation apprised at every step so that it can advocate appropriately on the City's behalf. MAYOR GOODMAN stated that perhaps it would help him understand if he could read the report on the City's status in this financial process.

COUNCILWOMAN TARKANIAN asked if the County already received federal funding, to which MR. BETEA replied that the City is different from the County, which receives direct funding from state and federal governments.

MS. CRAM indicated that meetings were held with a number of federal agencies to place the City in a position to receive additional ARRA funds. A meeting was also held with Department of Energy staff to discuss a grant from the \$400 million Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant for energy retrofits and sustainability projects. Hopefully, the City stands a good chance of receiving one of the four to six grants that will be awarded. The same effort was made to position the City well with HUD on the Sustainable Communities Initiative, which is slated to receive about \$150 million.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA'S administration is working hard to take down the silos between several of the federal agencies so that they can work with communities on a regional basis to do sustainable planning and coordination.

The continuing resolution also extends transportation programs for an additional month. The Surface Transportation, Highway and Transit Act expired September 30, 2009, and there is a standoff between the House and the Senate as to how to move forward. The House wants a five-year reauthorization bill in the amount of \$500 billion, while the Obama Administration and the Senate would like 18 months to develop a proposal.

Another issue consuming congress is climate change, and the House passed its version of the bill. The Senate released an 800-plus page version that will be reviewed by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. The City has been lobbying for an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant to be included in the climate change bill to provide a continual funding stream for sustainability initiatives. The House did not include that, but the Senate did.

Regarding public lands, after several years of work, the Nevada Cancer Institute bill passed Congress and the City is working with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on the next

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steps. As mentioned, lobbyists are working with other local jurisdictions and the delegation on a comprehensive look at the area around the Las Vegas Wash and proposals for a national park, while ensuring viable and consistent planning and capacity for the City's future growth. Lobbyists are also monitoring bill S940, which would convey the Nevada System of Higher Education federal lands for the College of Southern Nevada.

MS. CRAM concluded by stating that she is looking forward to continuing to work with City staff in crafting the federal agenda for the upcoming year that seeks to meet the challenges faced by citizens and elected representatives of the City of Las Vegas and to help achieve the goals of the City.

MAYOR GOODMAN emphasized that he wants the City to get its fair share of the significant amount of monies. He will give credit, as well as criticisms when due. He wants to see results not just efforts.

COUNCILMAN BARLOW asked how the City would go about applying for part of the \$2.1 billion the state received. CITY MANAGER FRETWELL answered that a 20-member committee looks at every grant available through the stimulus package, but some of those grants have no qualifying regulations. Staff looks at every possible competitive grant available and determines eligibility, specifies a funding amount and then submits the application. The federal government evaluates the application and determines grant approval.

For other formula grants, such as Community Development Block Grants that are based on eligibility, the City has to submit to a similar process and has to define the intent of each grant. She noted that enforcement and auditing by the federal government of grants received takes up a significant amount of staff time, because compliance has to be met.

COUNCILMAN BARLOW indicated that it is not good when the federal government has stringent auditing practices when it does not issue any monies to be audited. He noted that the City is topped out on every dollar to provide necessary services to the residents and change is necessary. CITY MANAGER FRETWELL mentioned that the City is not alone in its frustration of the slow process for releasing funds. Perhaps a greater level of engagement is necessary at the Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities to tweak the problematic process. Assistance from other associations in carrying the message to the federal government might be necessary. Unfortunately, the City is on the receiving end.

After the vote, CITY MANAGER FRETWELL commented that MS. CRAM and the Stimulus Committee have done a wonderful job for the City in advocating the goals of the Council and identifying opportunities, pursuing them and identifying weaknesses.

MAYOR GOODMAN reiterated that he wants to see results, although that may not be within the lobbyists' reach.